

when she lost two relatives to COVID and when a 2019 accident left her father paralyzed.

On Thursday, July 29, 2021, she led the American team's quest for gold in the women's all-around gymnastics event after the legendary Simone Biles withdrew. But Simone Biles stayed and was there for her teammate and was there in the stands. But with the pressure of the world upon her, Suni Lee, who never thought she would be leading that team, who never thought that this honor would be hers, gave the performance of her life.

Suni's difficult and daring uneven bars routine sealed her victory. The routine set a 6.8 difficulty mark and earned a score of 15.3, tied for the highest score by any gymnast in the competition. She defended the American title in the women's all-around gymnastics event, marking the fifth consecutive Olympic win for an American.

She also contributed to the U.S. women's gymnastics team's silver medal performance in the team competition. She is a teamplayer and a role model for young men and women around the Nation.

Suni's entire family contributed to her success. And for many of us who watched, we saw them all in that room, cheering her on.

Her family, back in time, fled terror and violence in their native country of Laos to create a better life for their children. Her father John Lee built Suni a wooden balance beam in their backyard when she was a child because they could not afford to buy one.

As she said after her championship performance, "We both worked for this. [My father] sacrificed everything to put me in gymnastics."

Suni Lee represented the best of America on the world stage.

Minnesota, as my colleague TINA SMITH will share with you soon, is home to more than 81,000 Hmong Americans, the largest urban concentration in the United States. Suni's family, like many, arrived in America in the aftermath of the Vietnam war seeking a better life.

Suni is the first Hmong American to make the U.S. Olympic team and the first to win an Olympic Gold Medal. She is the first Asian American to win the women's all-around gymnastics competition. Her accomplishments represent the resiliency of her community and are an inspiration to Hmong Americans and all of us. They also represent her own personal resilience to be able to shine in that moment with such grace under pressure. Truly, she has captured the hearts of Minnesotans and people around the world.

Suni Lee's win is a remarkable achievement. I am pleased to take this opportunity to congratulate her; her coach, Jess Graba; her parents, John Lee and Yeev Thoj; and her entire extended family. I wish her continued success throughout her gymnastics career and beyond, and we can't wait to welcome her home.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I am just delighted to be here today on the floor of the U.S. Senate with my colleague Senator KLOBUCHAR to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Sunisa Lee of St. Paul, MN, who won Olympic Gold in the individual all-around event in women's gymnastics in Tokyo this week.

Suni gave a historic performance while under immense personal pressure and under the difficult circumstances that have defined the 2021 Olympic Games. But she stepped up, and she gave an astounding performance to bring home gold, continuing the American tradition of excellence in women's gymnastics. Her routine on the uneven bars, as Senator KLOBUCHAR said, one of the most difficult ever attempted in women's gymnastics, was just stunning.

On her way to Olympic Gold, Suni faced really tremendous obstacles. After beginning her gymnastics training at age 6, Suni showed incredible dedication, focus, and drive to reach the elite levels of her sport despite injuries and personal challenges.

In 2019, her father was paralyzed in an accident but continued supporting his daughter's gymnastics career. And while continuing her training during the coronavirus pandemic, Suni suffered a broken foot, an Achilles tendon injury, and the tragic loss of her aunt and uncle to coronavirus.

While pandemic precautions meant there were no spectators to cheer her on in Tokyo, Suni's family, friends, community members, and gymnastics fans all over the country got together to cheer her on from afar with watch parties held in her honor. The videos of these gatherings show the incredible shared joy and pride in her incredible accomplishment, and I am sure that she could feel all that love and support as she competed in Tokyo.

Not only is Suni the youngest member of the U.S. women's Olympic gymnastics team, but she is also the first Hmong American on the U.S. Olympic team and now is the first Asian American to be the Olympic women's all-around champion.

Her leadership and sportsmanship are an inspiration, and Minnesota is so proud to call her one of our own. In fact, Minnesota's Governor, Tim Walz, and St. Paul's mayor, Melvin Carter, have announced that today, Friday, July 30, 2021, is "Sunisa Lee Day." It is too bad that Ms. KLOBUCHAR and I can't be there to help them celebrate in St. Paul.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate those who contributed to Suni's victory: her parents, John Lee and Yeev Thoj, and her coach, Jess Graba. After Suni won her gold, she reminded us all that no one achieves success alone as she said, "This is my family's medal, my medal. My coach's medal."

Madam President, in this moment, I also would like to take an opportunity to acknowledge the awe-inspiring leadership of Simone Biles. Her choice to withdraw from the all-around event in order to protect her health and safety was courageous and is an important reminder that mental health is an essential part of our overall well-being.

In addition to being the greatest of all time, Simone's powerful advocacy and her unwavering support for Suni and the rest of her team show that she is also a great team player and an activist.

Every Olympic medal represents untold hours of hard work and struggle and resilience, and Suni Lee's all-around gold is no exception.

So congratulations to Suni. We are all so proud of you. Thank you for your courage, your dedication, and your inspiration to all of us everywhere in this country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, with the Presiding Officer's help, and the help of 48 others—48 others in this body, we provided back in March an amendment; and then in final passage, we provided the biggest tax cut—the largest tax cut for working families ever.

It is called the Child Tax Credit. It has been several years in the making. We didn't make so much progress the last 4 years, but an election and a new President, coupled with a new U.S. Senate, has made all the difference in the world.

In my State, 2.4 million children are eligible. And 2.1 million of those—I will get to that in a moment; we haven't reached everybody yet. But 2.1 million saw last week in the mail—in their mailbox or direct deposits in their bank accounts—2.1 million children were the beneficiary of \$250 or \$300 last week.

So every month—July 15, coming up August 15, September 15, October 15, children from zero to 5, their parents will get \$300 each of those months. If their children are 6 to 17, those families will get \$250 per child. Almost every child—92 percent of children in Ohio, roughly the same; 9 out of 10 in the State of Wisconsin, the Presiding Officer's State, will be getting—their families will be getting checks in the mail—these checks in the mail.

In sort of a macro big way, we know this does a number of things. First of all, it drops the poverty rate among America's children by almost 50 percent. Imagine that. One bill we do drops the poverty rate among children in this country by 50 percent, something government has never been able to do. And because of this Child Tax Credit, the largest tax cut for working families in American history, it will make a huge difference.

In another macro sort of way, the people of Wisconsin and Ohio and other

States will benefit because we are injecting this kind of money. In Ohio last week, \$550 million was sent to the State from the Federal Government to these children, to these families. And for most of these families—the wealthiest people don't get this—it is 90 percent; 9 out of 10 families do, but they have children.

This money goes directly into these communities. They are going to be spending this money at the local grocery store, the local hardware store, to fix their car so they don't miss work, and maybe take their kid once in a while to a restaurant. So the money is not going to be put in a Swiss bank account. It will be spent in local communities, making a difference. That is sort of the big picture.

The joy of working on this bill and starting—I started working on this in 2013, joined by MICHAEL BENNET and Senator BOOKER, and then, since he came, Senator WARNOCK and Senator BALDWIN and Senator OSSOFF have been helpful and Senator WYDEN, the chair of the Finance Committee. The joy of this is to see how this affects individual families' lives.

So a couple of weeks ago, before the checks were sent out, I did a series of roundtables in Defiance, in Findlay, in Ryan, in Cleveland, in Dayton, in Toledo, in—where else?—in Youngstown, and in Cincinnati, and I just asked families: What are you going to do with this money? Many families didn't know it was even coming; the word wasn't out yet. I just heard some interesting comments. But then after the checks were sent out, I also heard stories, and here is what this means to families:

One mother said: You know, for the first time, I can now send my son to camp for a week, to a summer camp—for the first time in her life.

A father said: You know, I am now going to be able to buy for my daughter—she loves fastpitch softball. She is really good. I am going to be able to buy her the equipment to do that.

A number of families said: We are now in a position where we can actually, without scrounging—so many American families can barely afford their rent. Twenty-five percent of American families pay half their income in rent. Think about that. One out of four renters pays half their income in rent. One thing goes wrong in their lives—their car breaks down—they can end up being evicted.

So what this \$300 per child or \$250 per child—for a lot of families, it just relieved the anxiety of the difficulty of putting together the money they need to pay their rent, because the last week of a month for many families is different from the first three because, the last week, they start making cuts and not spending as much money on food, all the things they have got to do to pay their rent. Look, this is going to alleviate—it is going to lift that burden off so many families.

Other families who are a little more affluent but still, you know, hanging

on to being middle class are now able, they told me, to put \$100 aside every month. Because of this child tax credit, because of the largest tax cut for working families ever, they are going to be able to put aside \$100 a month for their child to go to Ohio State or to Denison or to Cleveland State or to Sinclair Community College in Ohio.

So all the kinds of things—and you know, Madam President, I know you have, in Wisconsin, have thought about this. The best thing about this is, you know, it is not Senator BALDWIN or Senator SCHUMER or Senator MCCONNELL or President Biden—it is not them saying to a family: OK. Here is some money. Here is where you are going to spend it. We are going to help you with this. We are going to help you. It is trusting these families. This \$250 a month or \$300 a month these families get, they get this money, and they decide what is best for their family.

It is still, frankly, Madam President, inexplicable to me that everybody on this side of the aisle voted no, every single one of them. They had two chances. They voted no on an amendment on the bill, and then they voted no on the bill to give the largest tax cut for working families ever.

We all know around here—it is no secret—that this side of the aisle likes tax cuts; they just like them for rich people. But they always argue: You know, if we cut taxes on the rich, it will trickle down; it will help everybody. Well, there is kind of no evidence for that, but they keep doing it because they know that it plays really well with their rich contributors.

But this is what tax cuts are really about. The child tax credit puts money in people's pockets, it gives them the choice on how to spend those dollars on behalf of their families, and it helps the community because there is more money in the community. We know that, and we know that the best kind of infrastructure in this country is to build a foundation for families.

I am for this bill that we are considering now: water, sewer, highways, bridges. I want to do that, but I want to build a foundation for families, too, not just the physical—a better highway system, a better water and sewer system—but I want to give families broadband. I want to give families a little bit of money like this does. I want to build and help families with housing because then that foundation—these families can launch their children into a more prosperous future, and that is, to me, what this is all about. That is why the child tax credit is the most important thing I have ever worked on in my career, and I think it is one of the most important things Congress has done in a quarter century.

I yield the floor.

(Mr. BROWN assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The majority leader.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I close the Senate, I want to inform the Senators where we are today.

First, I want to thank all of the Senators who voted to proceed today. The bipartisan group is still finalizing the text of their agreement, which will be the substitute amendment, with a non-partisan legislative counsel.

Once they are finished—this is a big job—the text will be reviewed, and then I will immediately offer the text of the bipartisan infrastructure agreement as the substitute amendment, making it the base bill, as I have promised. As soon as the bipartisan group finalizes the text of the substitute amendment and it becomes the base bill, we can start voting on amendments and make further progress on the bill over this weekend.

The Senate will resume session tomorrow at 11 a.m.

This is a really important bill, and I know all the parties want to make sure it is done right.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a morning of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AFGHAN SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISAS

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, nearly 20 years ago, the United States invaded Afghanistan to prevent that country from being exploited as a platform for terrorism and extremism. In doing so, the U.S. worked side-by-side with international and Afghan forces to remove the Taliban from power, facilitate democratic elections, build democratic institutions, and promote human rights throughout Afghanistan. Because of these efforts and the commitment and dedication of the Afghan people, the Afghanistan of 2021 is far different than the Afghanistan of 2001. And now that Afghanistan has made this progress, we must work with our Afghan partners to do everything in our power to preserve these gains and leave a stable country behind us. It is both a moral obligation and a national security priority that we do so.

As U.S. troops withdraw from Afghanistan, the safety and security of our Afghan allies who put their lives on the line to help our servicemembers and diplomats must be a top priority. This is about fulfilling a sacred promise that we made to those who served the U.S.-led mission in Afghanistan. It is a service that many Afghans have already paid for with their lives. Like U.S. personnel, our Afghan partners